

# Iowa Youth Congress

Iowa Division of Latino Affairs

December 7 & 8, 2007



Iowa student representatives elected from 51 high schools including the Meskwaki Settlement School met on December seventh and eighth, 2007, in Des Moines. They held their second annual daylong session in the Iowa House Chamber.

Speaker of the House, Pat Murphy, congratulated the Youth Congress members and spoke on how someday one of them could very well be occupying a seat in the Iowa House Chamber. Senate Assistant Minority Leader Pat Ward encouraged the young representatives to respect each others views and opinions as they deliberate their issues. Representative Wayne Ford reminded the Youth Congress members how Iowa has a long history of being in the forefront on civil rights issues and Representative Ako Abdul-Samad delivered a prayer, then spoke on the growing diversity and responsibility the youth face as the next leaders.



Speaker of the House,  
Pat Murphy gives  
Opening Remarks



Representative Wayne Ford  
Addresses the Iowa Youth  
Congress

Once called to order the Youth Congress went to work on their agenda and elected Devin Farrell as their new President and Nick de la Cruz as their new Vice President.

They then ordered and debated the issues brought in from their five regional meetings. In the late afternoon, after much discussion and debate, the Youth Congress moved to vote on which three legislative proposals to present to the second session of the 82nd Iowa General Assembly.



Representative  
Ako Abdul-Samad  
Delivers Opening Prayer



Senator Pat Ward  
Addresses the Iowa Youth  
Congress

The three issues adopted by the Iowa Youth Congress: **(1)** Provide a comprehensive cultural awareness curriculum in the school system. **(2)** Make sexual education a permanent part of an existing class like in physical education or social studies. **(3)** Increase the compulsory age from 16 to 18.



# Letter from the President

The Iowa Youth Congress has opened my eyes to grow as a person. This organization enables students who care about their community and want to make a difference. Not many students are able to participate in this spectacular involvement and I feel honored in being a member. We develop ideas which are then transformed into bills which are presented to the Iowa General Assembly.

The first time I heard about the Iowa Youth Congress it was over the public announcement system in my school, Central High School, Davenport, and I thought, "Wow I thought, this is something I can do." I had no idea that I would be a member of this incredible organization let alone its President!



Left to Right; Patrick Trizila, former Vice President, Nick de la Cruz, current Vice President, Devin Farrell, current President and Sukriti Nayar, former President

speaking skills aren't the best and I was competing against the former President Sukriti Nayar, an intelligent and wonderful person. I had no idea that I would win and now I feel extremely privileged that I am given this opportunity to lead.

I feel that the Iowa Youth Congress has made an impact on my life forever. I have gained so much knowledge on how the political arena works, and am immensely proud of myself in stepping out of my normal comfort zone to take on a leadership roll. I encourage every minority student to partake in this organization; minorities have a voice and it now can be heard! Share your thoughts, and get involved!

Devin Farrell, Central High School, Davenport  
IYC President

My experience in the Iowa Youth Congress (IYC) has been a very positive one. This past session I was elected Vice President of the Congress and I feel that being a congress attendee in the previous session propelled me to that spot. I enjoy IYC because I like discussing political issues that affect Iowa's youth. It has relevancy to us all and it's very easy to these teenagers' passion on issues that affect them. I am glad I did IYC and I am glad that other young Iowans will be allowed the opportunity to do the same thing.

Nick De La Cruz, Central High School, Davenport  
IYC Vice President

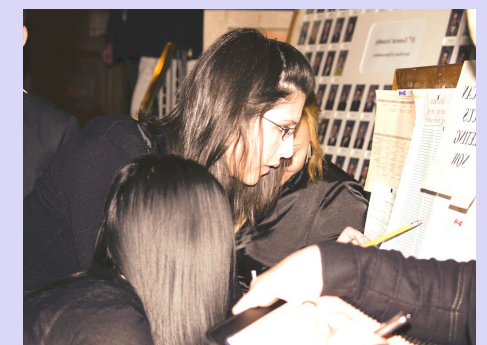
In my mind I wanted to be able to contribute to society in some way and help people. The Iowa Youth Congress does this for me.

The Youth Congress is divided into five different regions, and each region's members of the IYC vote on potential leaders, candidates, such as: President, Vice President, and Secretary. After the regional meetings, every member of the IYC gathers at the state capitol for the reenactment of processing a bill. Before the reenactment, the candidates from each region give a speech on why they should be elected.

When it came time to give my speech I was completely and utterly nervous. My public

## At the Capitol

Visiting Legislators — 2007 Session



The Iowa Youth Congress is a superb example of a hands-on-learning experience that allows students the opportunity to see how Iowa government really works.

Students learn the qualities of successful leadership, while fostering relationships with their peers from across the state.

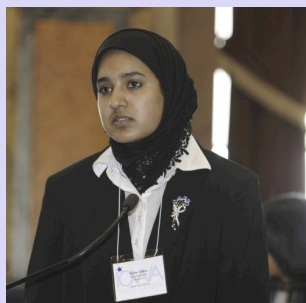
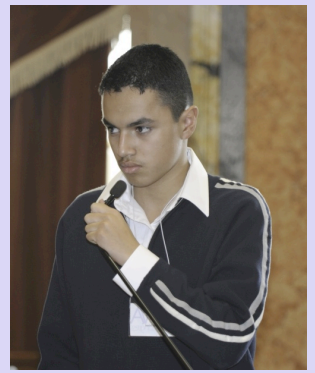
Thomas R. Hobson  
Manager, Government & Public Affairs  
Rockwell Collins

Dream Creator Sponsor  
**Rockwell  
Collins**



# Get the Picture

Iowa Youth Congress in Session





# Iowa Youth Congress Host First Annual Dream Forward Dinner

On the evening, December 7th, after the Iowa Youth Congress met, two hundred and eighty guest including Youth Congress representatives attended the first Dream Forward Dinner.

Lt. Governor Patty Judge spoke at the Dream Forward Dinner. She addressed the Youth Congress representatives, sharing with them how after high school she decided to study nursing because at the time few options were open to women. She told the story about how she would hear that women weren't meant to hold public office so in 1992 she decided to run for a seat in the Iowa Senate. She won. Then her story went on to be the first woman to be elected Iowa Secretary of Agriculture.

She encouraged the youth to dream, to know that their voice and congress represents the future which is good for Iowa, good for America.

Dagoberto Gilb, the Hemingway Award Winning writer, read from his works. Macarena Hernandez, Dallas Morning News staff reporter, read a story which is in the acclaimed book, Hecho en Tejas.

Presidential candidates from all parties were invited to attend the dinner and have some time to speak. Representatives from the Obama and Richardson campaign were in attendance and given an opportunity to speak.



Lt. Governor Patty Judge



Jamie Toledo representing Alliant Energy receiving the Dream Maker Award



Members of Pella Rolscreen Foundation receiving Dream Maker Award



Dagoberto Gilb,  
Hemingway Award Winning Writer  
read from his work



Macarena Hernandez reading from her work  
"One Family, Two Homelands"



Iowa Youth Congress members having a great time and  
celebrating their hardwork



Dream Maker Sponsor



Pella Rolscreen  
Foundation

It's more important than ever for young people to become engaged in the political and legislative process. The Iowa Youth Congress students are among our best and our brightest. Their actions and their opinions matter, and their work will have a lasting positive impact.

U.S. Rep. Dave Loebsack, U.S. Congress



# Planning Session

Mercy College of Health & Science

After their daylong session in the House Chamber Youth Congress members met at Mercy College of Health & Science to review their three issues and plan their next steps.

Two lobbyists experts on the legislative process spoke to the representatives on how bills are introduced, considered, and laws enacted. They also shared best practices on how to contact elected officials to discuss their issues.

Macarena Hernandez shared some pointers on how to get a letter to the editor. She explained to the Iowa Youth Congress representatives how one of the first things elected officials check in the morning are their local newspaper to read letters to the editor to get a sense of what voters are thinking.

She gave these pointers:

Check your local newspaper deadlines for submission.

Also send letters to national publications such as the Chicago Tribune, the Washington Post, and the New York Times.

Act on something you are passionate about.

Be timely, comment on something that is in the news, that is persuasive and to the point, and not to exceed 200 words. Stay brief, concise and clear.

It is best to edit your piece than to have someone at the newspaper do it.

Include your name and phone number. Editorial departments will not accept your letter if they cannot contact you.



Letter to the Editor

**The Des Moines Register**

January 15, 2008

## Raise the drop-out age

I believe that the drop-out rate in our state and our country is alarming. We should do something about it, right?

Teenagers are dropping out of school every year because they are allowed to. In Iowa, students can drop out at the age of 16, when they should not be able to make such a drastic decision. There is a reason why parents are still responsible for their children until they are 18 years old.

Fortunately, there are people who are trying to change this. I am a member of the Iowa Youth Congress, and we are proposing to the Iowa Legislature that students have to wait until they are 18 years old to drop out. By the time students are 18, they are mature enough to decide whether to drop out or not; that age is when students become adults, which means they should be able to make their own decisions.

Marlie J. Quinteros,  
Des Moines.



## Participants in the College—Job Fair

Buena Vista University  
Grandview College  
Drake University  
DMACC Urban Campus  
Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa  
Bankers Trust  
Iowa Lakes Community College  
Iowa Association of Community College Trustees

Dream Maker Sponsor



The Iowa Youth Congress is key to students understanding the larger picture of how their involvement in the legislative system directly impacts business and community interests. These students represent a competitive advantage for the State of Iowa.

Jamie L. Toledo  
Supplier Diversity & Development Specialist  
Alliant Energy



# Officers & Chairs

Participating in the Iowa Youth Congress helped me realize and appreciate the power that the youth of America have to express their views and make a difference. I am definitely glad that I had the opportunity to be involved in this forward-looking program. It gives minority high school students the chance to have a voice in Iowa government and the legislative process, providing us with a dynamic and purposeful environment that fosters civic engagement.

This past year was my first time as a member of the Iowa Youth Congress and I was impressed by the insightfulness and maturity of my peers as we worked together and come to a consensus on which issues were the most important and how to address them. I hope the Iowa Youth Congress will continue to attract as much enthusiasm as it has so far, for it has great potential.

Sandy Huang, Ames High School  
IYC Secretary

The Iowa Youth Congress truly bettered me as a person. I made new friends and I learned the history of African Americans in Iowa which made me appreciate my Iowan roots. I look forward to seeing everyone again.

Joseph Chatman, Muscatine High School  
IYC Treasurer

Region A Chair did not submit a statement.

Being a chair of the Iowa Youth Congress, I have learnt skills which will stay with me for a lifetime. IYC put me in a position where I had to take leadership and responsibility. At the congress in December, I had the most remarkable experience. This congress gave me the opportunity to make memories. Memories of sitting inside the chambers, debating and then meeting new people. It was also very exciting to see the amount of effort that goes into making a law.

I learnt a lot about our government and the importance of being involved in the political world that surrounds us. To sum it up, IYC has motivated all of us to be better involved in our local political affairs.

Aisha Azher  
Ames High School  
Region B Chair

If I was able to leave one piece of advice for the next generation, it would be to make a difference. My mother always told me if I want things to be done or if I want to make things happen I've got to step up to the plate and make sure that the job gets done. So that's why it's such an honor for me to be apart of the Iowa Youth Congress but more so to be Chairman, who better to make the change than the ones who want it! I'm really excited to see what we come up with and I'm looking forward to what bills we get passed!

Jade Chuntivia Brown  
West High School – Iowa City  
Region C Chair

The Iowa Youth Congress is a representation of not only the future of Iowa minorities, but the nation as a whole. In December this future met to discuss issues of concern. This very future, which I have the honor of being part of will continue to mold and shape the world that we live in, a world of many colors, beliefs, and people.

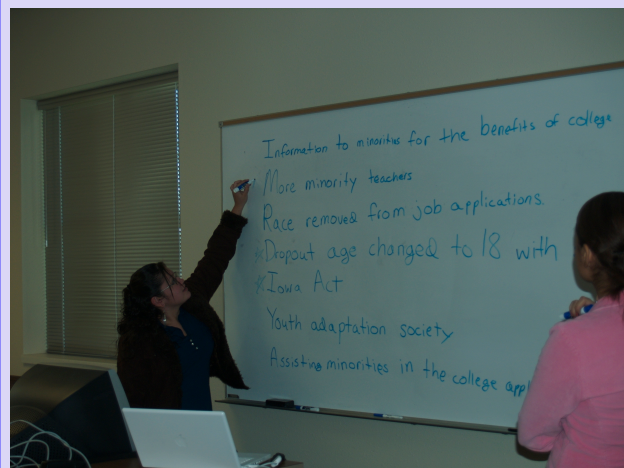
Fredrick Galoso  
Muscatine High School  
Region D Chair

The Iowa Youth Congress has been an amazing experience from the beginning.

It is so important for every young person to be involved in the legislative process and the Iowa Youth Congress has given me that extraordinary opportunity. I am honored to be a part of a group of young, dedicated, and talented individuals working for change. I look forward not only to seeing the work of the Iowa Youth Congress improve the lives of minority students across Iowa, but to see that others follow in our footsteps to get more young people involved in the legislative process.

Alexandra Gaffney-Peden,  
Roosevelt High School – Des Moines  
Region E Chair

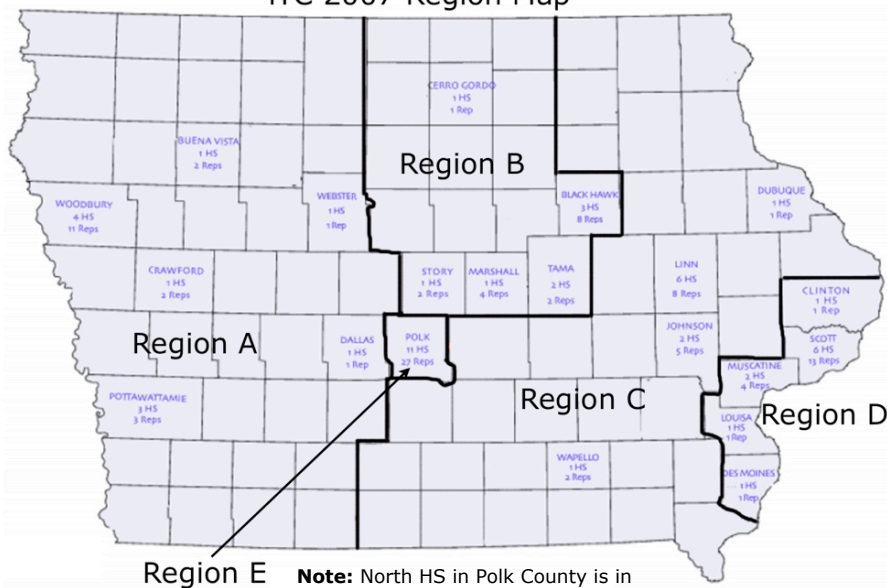
## Regional Meetings Lining up the Issues for a Vote





# Regional Meetings

iYC 2007 Region Map



Region E Meeting at DMACC Urban Campus on 10 November 2007



Region A Meeting at Iowa Western Community College on 27 October 2007



Region B members discussing their issues at DMACC Urban Campus on 10 November 2007

The 100 member Iowa Youth Congress is divided into five regions as shown above. Each region of twenty members and their alternates meet on a Saturday for a daylong session to present the three issues they have identified in their high school and local community. Duplicate issues are eliminated or worked into another issue.

Systemically the issues are deliberated to determine which three are to be presented before the Iowa Youth Congress session.

## Issues

In their meeting representatives from region 'A' engaged in a discussion about job applications for after school and summer jobs and how they never get called in for an interview. There was general agreement that perhaps the word 'Race' as an identifier ought to be removed from job applications. This particular issue did not make it as one of three voted on to send to the Iowa Youth Congress.

Representatives from Regions C&D discussed how state lottery and river boat gambling proceeds were intended to be used for education. As the discussion continued, they felt that these proceeds have been used to pay for state shortfalls or other projects. The representatives voted to take to the Youth Congress a proposal to have all lottery and gambling proceeds be used to fund the Iowa Promise Act, which would grant free tuition to any state institution of higher learning to any Iowa student who meets certain requirements.

Dream Helper Sponsor



Representative Nick De La Cruz said, "It'll help Iowa be more relevant for youth and keep them here." He said Iowa has a problem with youth leaving the state after college and this is one thing he believes the Iowa Youth Congress can address.



Regions C&D group photo after their regional meeting at Kirkwood Community College on 3 November 2007



# Iowa Youth Congress Constitution @ Work



Perry City Public Library  
April 2007

In the summer of 2006, the Iowa Youth Congress began work on their constitution which consists of six articles.

Article one is the naming of the organization: 'Iowa Youth Congress' which was adopted during their first session in 2006. Subsequent articles have been worked on at various occasions as when the Public Library in Perry hosted a constitution work session as shown on the left.

Another article ratified is composition and membership. The composition is targeted at the high schools which together represent 75% of minority enrollment. In 2006 this included 48 high schools and in 2007 it was 51 high schools. In both years, these high schools are located in 22 counties.

The 100 members of the Iowa Youth Congress along with alternates are elected by their peers in an election held at their high school. Once elected the representatives hold meetings in their high school and local community to determine which three issues to take to their regional meeting.

## Youth Congress Constitution Articles:

Name  
Purpose and Goal  
Composition and Membership  
Membership Removal  
Voting and Elections  
Officers

## Every Vote Counts

Since 2006, more than 5,000 students have participated in voting for representatives to the Iowa Youth Congress. After a presentation an election is held. The ballots are counted at the office of the Iowa Division of Latino Affairs and the results are forwarded to the Principal's office of the respective high school.



City High elections, Iowa City



Marshalltown High School ballots being counted



West High in Iowa City placing their vote



East High School elections, Des Moines

The Iowa Youth Congress is a testimony to the diversity, awareness and willingness of high school students to exercise their constitutional rights to petition their government for positive changes, and an inspiration in that none of their actions were motivated by personal gain other than making a democratic republic work the way it is supposed to. Avril and I are grateful for the opportunity to support such an unselfish effort to make Iowa live up to its motto "Our Liberties We Prize and Our Rights We Will Maintain."

Dr. Hal S. Chase

History Instructor, DMACC-Urban Campus  
President, Farmers & Merchants Bancorp, Winterset, Iowa

Dream Helper Sponsor

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**Financial Group**

I love the issues that they have identified. The kids have given much thought and put a lot of effort into this. You should see them on the House floor, they act like belong there.

Dave Thede  
Dean Of Students  
Central High School, Davenport



The "Future Workforce Shortage." How often is this heard in the media, talked about in government and workforce development offices, in boardrooms, in school meetings, in public forums? Plenty.

Never in American history has the economic success of minorities been as important to the majority population as it will soon become. Soon is here, when we consider that by 2010, today's teens and young people will be the largest segment of America's labor force.



In Iowa, the workforce shortage is estimated to be 150,000 workers by 2012. Some say we should pull new college graduates from out of state. We think that we should recruit from home, Iowa.

Together with Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa we have developed a youth workforce training program. This program can be tailored to the specific needs of the employer. The pool of workers comes from those participating in the Iowa Youth Congress and its network. These students excel in high school and are elected by their peers.

# Iowa

## Youth Will Work

Good for Community

### Work for Them

Experience for the workforce of the future. High school enrollment reflects the diversity that Iowa is becoming. In a twenty year period minority enrollment in 1987 grew from 5% to 16% in 2007.

In the next ten years, by 2017, this student enrollment is predicted to grow nearly 30%. In Iowa, the workforce shortage is estimated to be 150,000 workers.

### Work for You

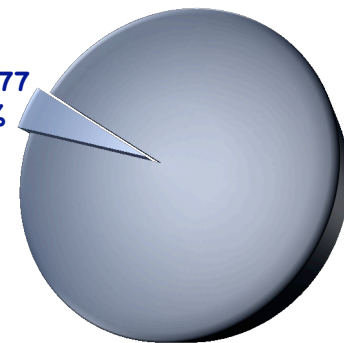
Together, Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa and the Iowa Youth Congress provide you with top students who are trained, supported and ready to work for you.

### Works for Us

Our youth, our families, our community. Good for Iowa.

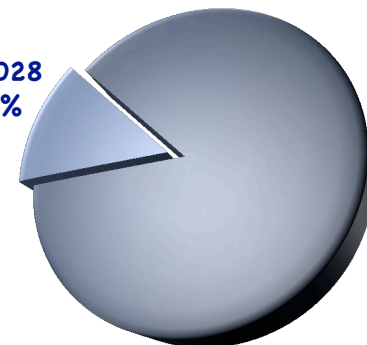
**1986-1987**  
462,555 Total  
High School Enrollment

22,777  
5%



**2006-2007**  
418,454 Total  
High School Enrollment

65,028  
16%



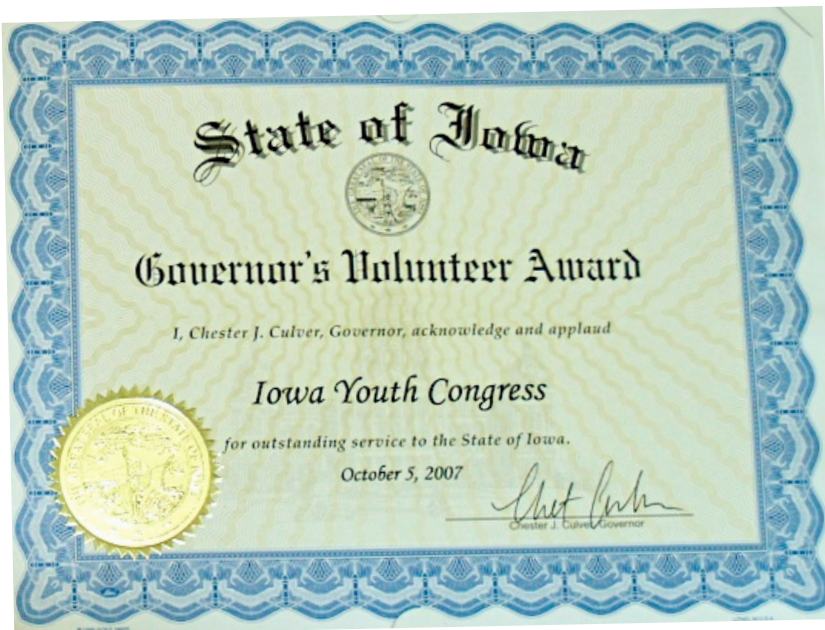
**IOWA**  
Division of Latino Affairs



# Recognition



On April 2007, several Iowa Youth Congress members attended the Volunteer Award Ceremony by United Way in which they were recognized with a certificate.



On October 5, 2007, the Iowa Youth Congress was recognized with an award by the Governor for their volunteering work. They received the Governor's Volunteer Award.



## Certificate of Recognition Issued by Governor Culver and Lt. Governor Judge

The purpose of the Iowa Youth Congress is to evoke a sense of community and place and inspire our youth with hope. Among the most endearing gifts one generation gives the next is the gift of heritage and the opportunity for a better life. Melissa's belief in both are at the core of her work to make Iowa a "Dream Forward" state. She has given life to a simple truth; that African American, Latino, Asian, Native American and New Iowan student shall have a voice in helping shape public policy in Iowa.

On behalf of all Iowans, we thank Melissa for her tireless efforts to unite and inspire the youth of Iowa.



Melissa Esquivel and Lt. Governor Judge



# Upcoming Events & Accomplishments

- Iowa Youth Congress members will present at the Department of Education's Community College Diversity Seminar at Marshalltown Community College on Monday, April 28, 2008.
- The Iowa Youth Congress will convene for the 3rd Annual session in the Iowa House Chamber in July 2008.
- The Iowa Youth Congress web site is going through a make over to meet the Congress needs.
- The Iowa Youth Congress has formed a committee to produce a monthly newsletter, which will be sent out to members and supporters.
- The Iowa Youth Congress had a display at the Volunteer Awareness Day in the State Capitol on February 26, 2008.
- The Iowa Youth Congress participated in the First Annual Youth Working Together Advocacy Conference, which was a joint effort of Elevate2Inspire!, Just Eliminate Lies, Iowa Youth Congress and the State of Iowa Youth Action Committee in August 2007.
- During the Summer of 2007, the Iowa Youth Congress members presented at Our Kids Summer Seminar held at Simpson College the results of a survey on ESL accreditation they collected from Iowa public schools.
- In July, the Iowa Youth Congress joined with Goodwill Industries of Central Iowa to develop a youth workforce training program called Iowa Youth Will Work



The Iowa Youth Congress display board at the Volunteer Awareness Day celebration at the State Capitol.

# Become a Dream Forward Sponsor

The Iowa Youth Congress is a program made possible in large part by private contributions. To be a Dream Forward Team donor, please make a contribution to the Iowa Division of Latino Affairs in support of the Iowa Youth Congress.

- Dream Team Sponsor      \$25+
- Dream Helper Sponsor    \$2,500
- Dream Maker Sponsor     \$3,500
- Dream Creator Sponsor    \$5,000

Contributions are accepted at:  
Iowa Division of Latino Affairs  
Lucas State Office Building  
321 E. 12th Street  
Des Moines, Iowa 50319  
Tel. (515) 281-7015 Fax (515) 242-6119

Thank you for your support, your help and your words of encouragement. It is because of you that the Iowa Youth Congress is a success. One with your continuing support will be a permanent success story in Iowa.

Special Thanks To:



The Commission on the Status of Iowans of Asian & Pacific Islander Heritage,  
the Iowa Status of African-Americans,  
Sisters on Target, Diversity Focus, Drake University Department of Education,  
El Grupo de Mujeres Hispanas, Hal and Avril Chase, Iowa Department of Education, all  
individuals who purchased a ticket to the Dream Forward Dinner, and all representatives of  
colleges/universities and companies which participated at the job/college fair.



## Iowa Youth Congress

We embark on this work because among the most endearing gifts that one generation gives the next is the gift of heritage and the opportunity for a better life. The purpose of this project is to evoke a sense of community and place and infuse the coming generation with hope.